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SENSITIVE
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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2018

TAGS: PHUM PREL

SUBJECT: PHNOM PENH RESPONSE TO ACTIVISTS FOR DEMOCRACY AND DISSIDENTS OUTREACH REQUEST

REF: A. STATE 44903

- 1B. PHNOM PENH 360
- 1C. PHNOM PENH 310
- 1D. 07 PHNOM PENH 1500
- 1E. 07 PHNOM PENH 143

¶11. (S) Summary: This is a response to Ref A requesting a summary of Post's outreach and activities to support, seek out and meet with activists for democracy and those who demand human rights. There are no known major dissidents from other countries living in Cambodia, however the Embassy has been active in supporting North Korean asylum seekers here and raising the situation of activists in Burma and North Korea with the Cambodian government. In addition, the list of Embassy activities to support and meet with Cambodian democracy and human rights activists is long. As we have stated elsewhere, the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia destroyed the country's social and political underpinnings such that, while democratic structures and processes have advanced markedly, the government is still more autocratic than democratic. In this context, there are no political action groups in Cambodia and democracy and human rights activists often accomplish their work through NGOs. End summary.

¶12. (S) The Embassy promotes U.S. policies to support North Korean asylum seekers, including the 2004 North Korean Human Rights Act. Embassy officials maintain rigorous contact with Cambodian government officials regarding North Korean refugees who approached the Embassy, including the first four in January 2007 (Refs E and F), to confirm the government's assistance in ensuring a low-profile, relatively swift U.S. resettlement process for the individuals. Since then, three more North Koreans have approached the Embassy and a total of four North Koreans have been resettled in the U.S. from Cambodia.

¶13. (SBU) The Embassy has made multiple representations at the highest level pressing for stronger support for the democratization of Burma, release of political prisoners there, and the transparent adoption of a constitution by the Burmese people according to international norms. The Embassy has also facilitated exchanges on Burma between senior U.S. Government officials and high-ranking Cambodian officials. U.S. Embassy support for democracy activists in Burma helped keep the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) focused on ASEAN's support for international efforts such as the Gambari mission and to use the RGC's own influence to effect positive change in Burma.

¶14. (SBU) Embassy officials frequently reach out to Khmer Kampuchea Krom human rights activists in Cambodia. Khmer Kampuchea Krom are ethnically Khmer, like the majority of Cambodians, but they historically have inhabited an area that is within Vietnam's borders and Cambodian Khmer Kampuchea Krom closely follow the treatment of their ethnic kin in Vietnam. As stated in the 2007 Cambodia Country Report on

Human Rights Practices (HRR), the Cambodian government has disrupted some Khmer Kampuchea Krom demonstrations against alleged mistreatment of Khmer Kampuchea Krom persons in Vietnam. Among the many Embassy outreach efforts in regards to the Khmer Kampuchea Krom, we called a meeting with several Khmer Kampuchea Krom human rights activists to discuss issues specific to this minority group. In addition, in the wake of a bombing plot nominally linked to a small, unorganized group of Khmer Kampuchea Krom supporters, we have reached out to Khmer Kampuchea Krom political activists, including a former Cambodian Senator, to ascertain the situation of their civil and political rights and to offer the continued assistance of the Embassy to ensure their right to conduct legitimate political activities.

¶5. (SBU) We also regularly engage with activists for democracy and human rights. In early April, the Embassy led discussions with members of the opposition Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) when the MOI and other government officials signaled they would deny permission for a rally organized by the SRP (Ref C). In advance of Human Rights Day on December 10, the Ambassador headed another Embassy intercession with the MOI when government officials denied local human rights leaders and NGOs permission to march and rally in observance of the day (Ref D). Both peaceful marches and rallies were permitted after Embassy involvement in the discussions about granting permission.

¶6. (SBU) The Ambassador met (septel) with four major political party leadership groups -- including the opposition Human Rights Party and Sam Rainsy Party -- to emphasize the USG's support for democratic processes in the run-up to the

July national election and to outline the Embassy's commitment to monitoring the election, to promoting more equal access to media, and to advocating for a free and fair electoral process.

¶7. (SBU) In addition, the Embassy encourages high-level visitors to meet with human rights and democracy activists while they are in Cambodia. For example, during Senator Maria Cantwell's (D-WA) November 2007 visit, she participated in a coffee hosted by the DCM with NGOs active in the issue of trafficking-in-persons, and a November 2007 Congressional staff delegation met with human rights leaders during a human rights roundtable at the Embassy.

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